WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1.   A software management system, comprising:

2   a vendor package template that provides a script to

3   install, upgrade, and remove at least one software package;

4   a package importer to receive said at least one

5   software package, where said package importer creates an X-

6   package document based on said vendor package template; and

7   a package agent to receive, deploy and execute said X-

8   package at a target computer.

1   2.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2   said package importer receives a user identity for

3   recording.

1   3.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2   said at least one software package includes packages from

3   different vendors.

1   4.   The software management system of claim 3, wherein

2   said X-package includes a substantially uniform set of

3   attributes that allows said at least one software packages

4   to be managed in a single user interface.

1   5.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2   said package importer tags said X-package with a signature.

1   6.   The software management system of claim 5, further

2   comprising:

3   an authentication element to provide verification of

4   the X-package by validating the signature in the X-package

5   with a list of certificates trusted by the target computer.

1   7.   The software management system of claim 6, further

2   comprising:

3   a script extractor to extract an X-package script.

1   8.   The software management system of claim 7, wherein

2   said X-package script includes logic for interacting with a

3   vendor-specific package agent.

1   9.   The software management system of claim 7, wherein

2   said X-package script includes logic for interacting with

3   multiple operating systems.

1   10.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2   said X-package further includes a name of a user who

3   imported said at least one software package.

1   11.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2 said X-package further includes hash of package files

3 included in said at least one software package.

1   12.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2 said package agent checks relevant operating system of said

3 at least one software package.

1   13.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2 said package agent downloads any needed files.

1   14.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein

2 said package agent reports status.

15.   A software management system, comprising:

a distribution management server including:

a vendor package template that provides a script to install, upgrade, and remove at least one software package; and

a package importer to receive said at least one software package, said package importer creates an X-package document based on said vendor package template, where said package importer tags said X-package with a signature;

a plurality of target computers, each target computer including:

an authentication element to provide verification of the X-package by validating the signature in the X-package with a list of certificates trusted by the target computer;

a script extractor to extract an X-package script; and

a package agent to receive, deploy and execute said X-package at the target computer.

16.   The software management system of claim 15, wherein said at least one software package includes packages from different vendors.

1   17.   The software management system of claim 16,

2 wherein said X-package includes a substantially uniform set

3 of attributes that allows said at least one software

4 packages to be managed in a single user interface.

1   18.   A method for distributing vendor-specific software

2 to target computers, comprising:

3   importing the vendor-specific software using a vendor

4 package template to create an X-package having a script;

5   transferring said X-package to target computers; and

6   processing said X-package script.

1   19.   The method of claim 18, further comprising:

2   authenticating the X-package by validating a signature

3 on said X-package.

1   20.   The method of claim 18, further comprising:

2   extracting the script from said X-package for

3 processing.

1   21.   The method of claim 18, wherein said processing

2 said X-package script includes checking a relevant operating

3 system of the vendor-specific software.

1   22.   The method of claim 18, wherein said processing

2   said X-package script includes downloading all relevant

3   files.

1   23.   The method of claim 18, wherein said processing

2   said X-package script includes reporting status.

1   24.   An apparatus comprising a machine-readable storage

2   medium having executable instructions that enable the

3   machine to:

4   import the vendor-specific software using a vendor

5   package template to create an X-package having a script;

6   transfer said X-package to target computers; and

7   process said X-package script.

1   25.   The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising:

2   authenticate the X-package by validating a signature on

3   said X-package.

1   26.   The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising:

2   extract the script from said X-package for processing.